
MÜJDE PEKER

A DOUBLE BONE COMB FROM KARAMATTEPE, THE NIF MOUNTAIN EXCAVATION

Summary. A miniature double bone comb was found in the excavations at Karamattepe in 2009 in the context of the Nif (Olympos) Mountain Research and Excavation Project. A new interpretation of its function is proposed here in light of both its find context in the residential area of the site and its socket for a handle, a feature not found on other comparable examples. This paper presents new suggestions about the purpose and date of this and other such combs.

INTRODUCTION

The Nif (Olympos) Mountain is located east of Izmir and south-west of the Kemalpaşa Plain. To the east of the site is the Karabel Pass which connects the road running between Smyrna and Sardeis in the Kaystros Valley in the north with the Torbalı Plain in the south (Fig. 1).

The archaeological work at Nif began under the direction of Prof. Dr Elif Tül Tulunay with exploratory campaigns in 1999–2001, and continued with surveys in 2004–5. The first excavation seasons under the direction of Prof. Dr Tulunay began in 2006, with the kind support of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Turkish Republic and of Istanbul University. Some settlement remains, dating from the eighth century BC to the thirteenth century AD, were found at the sites of Karamattepe (Fig. 2), Balıcaoluk, Dağkızılca and Başpınar within the borders of the Nif Mountain Research and Excavation Project (Tulunay 2012, 81, 84, 90–1).

THE MINIATURE DOUBLE BONE COMB

In the 2009 season, a double bone comb (Figs. 3 and 4) was found in one of the eastern trenches, Trench T30a, in Karamattepe (Tulunay 2011, 408, 418 fig. 6b). The Karamattepe comb was deposited in the Izmir Archeological Museum after the 2009 excavation season: it has the excavation inventory number Nif K.09-20 and museum inventory number E.920. The tips of the teeth and two corners diagonally opposed are broken away; one of its sides shows greater wear than the other. It is a double comb with 16 teeth in one set and 15 teeth in the other (Figs. 3, 4, 6 and 7). The teeth are fine and narrow-spaced. Both sides carry the same scheme of incised

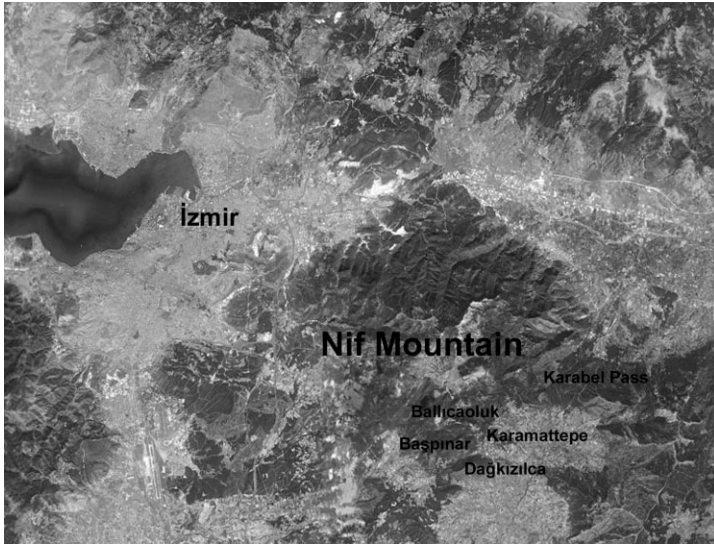


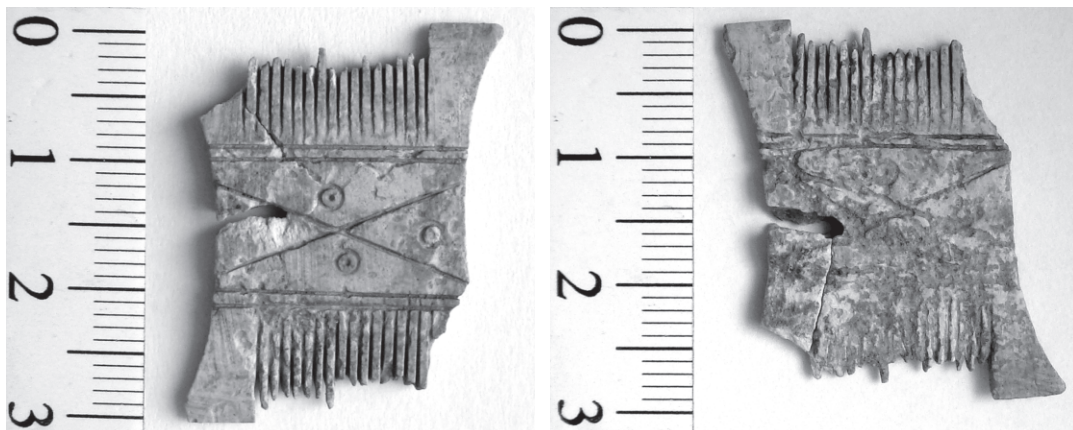
Figure 1

The location of the Nif Mountain (The Nif Mountain Research and Excavation Project archive).



Figure 2

Aerial view of trenches in Karamattepe (The Nif Mountain Research and Excavation Project archive).



Figures 3 and 4

The Karamattepe comb. Front and rear views (The Nif Mountain Research and Excavation Project archive).



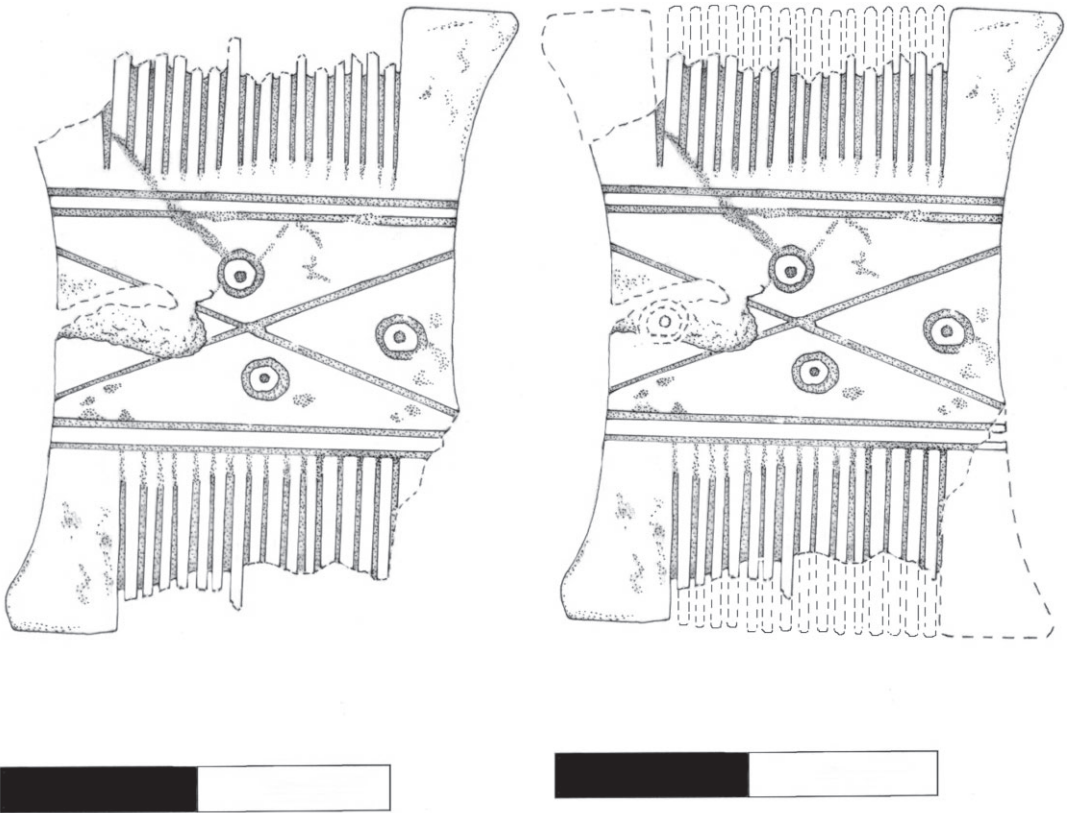
Figure 5

The socket of the Karamattepe comb (The Nif Mountain Research and Excavation Project archive).

decoration in the rectangular space between the teeth. This zone is bordered by two parallel lines at the roots of the teeth. The rectangular space within is divided by a pair of crossing diagonal lines; in each of the resulting four triangular spaces is a small circle with a dot at its centre. The remains of red paint are preserved in one of the circles. The long edges of the H-shaped comb are concave, similar to Buchholz type V e (Buchholz 1985, 105, 110–18); a circular socket for a handle was opened on one edge (Figs. 5 and 8). The comb is miniature in size, measuring 3.25 cm high, 2.5 cm wide and 0.3 cm thick. According to the first analysis of the palaeoanthropologists, it was crafted from a bovine bone.

Analogy and dating

The examples most similar to the Karamattepe comb, in terms of type, decoration and size, were found in the sanctuary of Pan and the Nymphs in the Corycian cave (Κορύκειο



Figures 6 and 7

The drawing and reconstruction of the Karamattepe comb by Ceren Baykan (The Nif Mountain Research and Excavation Project archive).

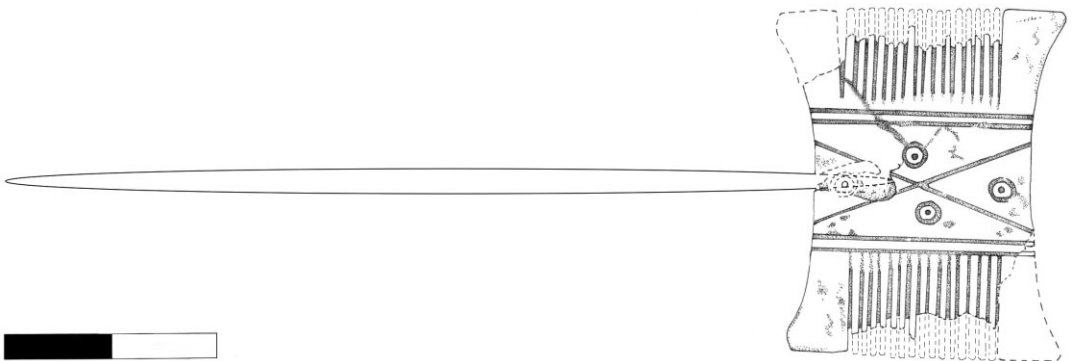


Figure 8

The reconstruction of the Karamattepe comb with a handle by Ceren Baykan (The Nif Mountain Research and Excavation Project archive).